



**FIRST ANNUAL CONSERVATION**  
**PRIORITIES REPORT**

**California Legacy Project**

**The Resources Agency**  
**January 14, 2002**

# FIRST ANNUAL CONSERVATION PRIORITIES REPORT

## Table of Contents

<b>Purpose.....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>California Legacy Project To Date .....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Priorities And Criteria - Resources Agency Departments And</b>	
<b>Conservancies.....</b>	<b>6</b>
Agency Wide Priorities And Criteria.....	6
Department Of Fish And Game .....	10
Wildlife Conservation Board .....	12
Department Of Parks And Recreation .....	13
Department Of Conservation (DOC).....	19
<b>State Conservancies Within The Resources Agency.....</b>	<b>21</b>
State Coastal Conservancy (SCC) .....	21
California Tahoe Conservancy (CTC).....	22
Coachella Valley Mountains Conservancy (CVMC).....	23
San Joaquin River Conservancy (SJRC).....	23
Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy (SMMC) .....	24
San Gabriel And Lower Los Angeles River.....	25
Baldwin Hills Conservancy (BHC).....	25
<b>Conclusion.....</b>	<b>26</b>

***FIRST ANNUAL CONSERVATION PRIORITIES REPORT***  
***CALIFORNIA RESOURCES AGENCY***  
***JANUARY 14, 2002***

**PURPOSE**

This report describes the existing criteria and priorities that are used for acquiring conservation land for each of the Resource Agency Departments and Conservancies. It also highlights certain themes or priorities that have wide usefulness and increasing importance to the Administration, the Resource Agency and its constituent Departments and Conservancies. It fulfills the commitment made by the Agency in a letter dated Nov. 27, 2000 from Senator Steve Peace as Chair of the Joint Legislative Budget Committee to Mr. Tim Gage, Director, Department of Finance requesting a "Report on Conservation Priorities" from the California Continuing Resource Investment Strategy Project (now the California Legacy Project) being developed by the Resources Agency.

**CALIFORNIA LEGACY PROJECT TO DATE**

The California Legacy Project is developing a systematic method for making conservation investment decisions based on science, societal values, and broad input. In 2001, the Legacy Project focused on defining and refining that systematic method for decision-making. It is now in the intermediate stages of compiling and evaluating existing data, identifying critical data gaps, filling data gaps as feasible at the available funding level, and soliciting informed public input. A statewide analysis of conservation options based upon the Legacy Project methodology and the data collected to inform that method will begin in the fall of 2002.

The Legacy Project contracted with the National Center for Ecological Analysis and Synthesis (NCEAS) in January 2001 to develop a methodology to identify state conservation priorities. A draft report on that methodology was completed in April 2001. The first stage in the methodology includes a systematic process for identifying criteria

to be used in prioritizing conservation options. Between July and December 2001 the Legacy Project held six workshops with agency and outside experts to identify those criteria for seven key resource types (terrestrial biodiversity, aquatic biodiversity and watershed values, agricultural croplands, grazing lands, forests, rural recreational lands, and urban open space). There also have been many meetings between Legacy Project staff and managers of key departments responsible for carrying out conservation mandates about the science, procedures and conservation criteria that they already use in developing their conservation investment priorities, and how the priorities of different departments, boards and conservancies coincide or overlap. Because the FY 2002/2003 conservation budget recommendations will be based on the science and criteria used by these individual departments, this report will focus in detail on those criteria.

Concurrent with these criteria discussions, the Legacy Project staff is working with departments to identify statewide databases that can be used to map initial conservation criteria identified in the workshops mentioned above.

In the spring of 2002 the Legacy Project will hold eight regional workshops with an invited public to refine and gain some agreement on prioritization criteria within each region. These workshops will also focus on identifying existing conservation planning efforts to ensure that the project builds on existing efforts and promotes partnership opportunities in its conservation priorities methodology. In preparation for this effort, the Legacy Project has been collecting existing and emerging conservation priorities in plans already implemented or committed to by federal, state, and local agencies, and nonprofit organizations. Once the conservation criteria and current regional conservation priorities are developed they will guide which data sets and maps will be included in the decision support tools that the Legacy Project will create to assist decision makers in prioritizing conservation options.

Already, progress has been made in creating several key statewide data sets that did not previously exist. A contractor has been identified that will incorporate urban growth models into the decision support tools. A public land ownership data layer has been updated and improved. Local public ownership will be added, and a data layer on conservation easements owned by public agencies and non-profits is underway. In

addition, the Legacy Project is convening a multi-agency working group to come to consensus on the development of improved and higher resolution statewide coverage for terrestrial vegetation communities that will be useful for many different agencies, departments and conservancies.

The Legacy Project has also convened a group of wetland managers and mapping agencies to identify how to build a statewide wetlands landcover map, which does not currently exist. The project is working with the Department of Fish and Game and the Statewide Riparian Joint Venture to develop the design and implementation of a statewide riparian areas map, also not currently available.

Together, these four statewide map improvements and the maps of current conservation commitments and priorities will make it much easier for strategic statewide conservation priorities to be identified. In addition, The National Center for Ecological Analysis and Synthesis has continued to expand the California Legacy Project's conservation priorities methodology by developing economic models and "portfolio designs" to be applied as well<sup>1</sup>.

In the fall of 2002, all of these elements will begin to come together to create easy-to-use tools that will assist decision makers in identifying conservation priorities. These priorities can then be based on, and communicated through, the Geographic Information System (GIS) data layers and maps that the project has systematically identified, collected and/or created this year. Priorities identified with the help the Legacy Project's tools and mapping will form the basis of subsequent Legacy Project conservation priorities reports.

This year's conservation priorities report describes the existing criteria and priorities that are used for acquiring conservation land for each of the Departments and Conservancies. It will aid the Legacy Project in developing more effective conservation decision support tools and improved data sets in 2002. Future reports will also address priorities and criteria for stewardship of public and private lands.

---

<sup>1</sup> These economic models will demonstrate the degree of resource protection achieved with various levels of investment, and they assist in identifying the most efficient allocation of funds. Portfolio designs ensure a diversity of investment types (i.e. types of resources to be conserved).

## **PRIORITIES AND CRITERIA - RESOURCES AGENCY DEPARTMENTS AND CONSERVANCIES**

### **AGENCY WIDE PRIORITIES AND CRITERIA**

The Legacy Project report of 5/23/01, "*Legal Mandates Related to the Conservation of Land and Natural Resources*", in part describes the authorities for each Department and Conservancy within the Resources Agency to acquire land for conservation purposes (all California agencies with conservation land acquisition as a primary purpose are within the Resources Agency.) Each Department or Conservancy acquires interests in land consistent with their legal authorities. These authorities are diverse; some describe geographical boundaries such as for the Tahoe Conservancy, others define purposes such as recreation or endangered species protection, and some prescribe acquisition methods such as agricultural easements.

The diversity of legal mandates means there cannot be one set of priorities to meet the many requirements. In addition to this diversity of missions certain themes or priorities have wide usefulness and increasing importance to the Administration, Resource Agency and its constituent Departments and Conservancies.

#### **Endangered Species/NCCP**

A primary criterion for conservation priority is the presence of threatened and endangered species. California has 298 State-listed or candidate rare, threatened, and endangered species and more than 1500 additional species of concern that may require listing in the future if adequate conservation strategies are not developed and implemented. For all of these species and their habitats, the Department of Fish and Game (DFG) has a public trust responsibility. Furthermore, under Section 2052 of the Fish and Game Code, the Legislature declared that "it is the policy of the state to conserve, protect, restore, and enhance any endangered species or any threatened species and its habitat and that is the intent of the Legislature, consistent with conserving the species, to acquire lands for habitat for these species."

DFG has found that in most cases the most effective approach to conserving species is to conserve assemblages of species and habitats on a landscape level through locally based cooperative conservation planning. The Natural Community Conservation Planning (NCCP) program promotes the creation of plans to conserve multiple species by conserving the ecosystems upon which the species depend. NCCP plans help to recover threatened and endangered species, and at the same time, preclude more common species from declining to the point of endangerment.

NCCP plans typically include the creation of a reserve system to provide for the conservation and recovery of species covered by the plan. Reserve systems are designed based on several widely accepted conservation tenets including the need for large core habitat blocks and linkages between the core areas. The core areas provide the main portions of the reserve that must provide for all the species needs. The linkages provide areas of livable habitat that also function as movement corridors, assuring genetic interchange for species over time.

NCCP plans are collaboratively developed with local governments, community stakeholders, and other resource agencies. The plans employ a variety of tools to establish reserve systems. Development proponents contribute their fair share through conservation-minded project design and compensation for habitat lost to development. Existing public lands with habitat values are also included in the reserve. However, acquisition of additional habitat is crucial to completing the reserve system and achieving recovery of covered species. State and Federal land acquisition funding has been used to achieve strategically important habitat protection for core and linkage areas, and is critical to leveraging additional funding and opportunities to meet the State's conservation goals.

## **Connectivity**

Developing a conservation landscape vision for the State includes identifying important conservation lands at a variety of scales. In a regional conservation plan it is important to identify species core population areas, core habitat areas, and linkages within regional reserve systems. These landscape linkages associated with regional conservation plans are generally large, regional connections between habitat blocks

(core areas) designed to facilitate emigration and immigration of animals between different sections of the landscape and help ensure that species populations in various portions the plan area function as “meta populations”. By helping ensure that they function a part of a meta population, more effective preserve designs are possible<sup>2</sup>. Linkages are essential to maintaining ecological function across the landscape ecoregion. Linkages may include habitat linkages, riparian corridors, river water columns etc.. Connectivity also includes the concept of smaller stepping stone reserves for birds, bats, and insects to disperse across short distances of non-habitat areas.

At the largest scale, a conservation landscape vision for the State should also consider linkages between regional reserve systems and mountain ranges. Many species and habitats extend beyond the artificial boundaries established for planning, and their survival depends on a sound conservation strategy that spreads across their entire range. Ensuring viable linkages among regional reserve systems will be essential for conserving biodiversity and recovering species. The best tool for addressing the protection of linkages is to plan for conservation at the regional level while maintaining a broader vision for linking regional reserve systems.

## **Urban Recreation**

California is the most highly populated State in the nation, with roughly 35 million residents today, and some 50 million projected by 2025. However, many of California’s most heavily urbanized areas are under-served by local and regional recreation facilities and many urban residents, particularly those who are economically disadvantaged, are either unaware of, or feel isolated from, state and federal park lands and recreation facilities. Therefore, in addition to its traditional roles in managing historic sites, natural resource lands and outdoor recreation areas throughout the state, the Davis administration, and especially the Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR), is seeking to provide opportunities closer to where people live. The State’s presence in

---

<sup>2</sup> Meta populations are those that interbreed. In designing preserves it is important to have large species populations with interbreeding in order to ensure a viable population. When a species in a preserve is isolated and the number of animals is low the chance of one event causing the local population to go extinct are greater.



urban areas should be viewed as an opportunity to fulfill its natural and cultural resource preservation goals as well as to provide recreational opportunities for urban residents. The State and DPR will concentrate its initial efforts on the most heavily and densely populated urban areas that are also the most under-served.

### **Maintaining Working Landscapes**

Working landscapes are agricultural, grazing, or forested lands that may also serve as wildlife habitat or corridors. By maintaining the current productivity of these lands, California obtains the products of those lands and also aids local economies and community stability. When land values rise due to urban encroachment or rural “ranchette” development it becomes difficult for current owners to pay taxes and owners are more likely to sell the land for development. Increasingly, conservation easements are used to purchase development or conservation interests. These help to offset tax increases and allow current owners to continue to work their land.

### **Protecting Watersheds, Riparian and River Corridors and Wetlands**

The health of watersheds is critical to the ecological resources and communities within them. The way in which roads are cut, development occurs, and drainage is altered can determine whether or not critical resources survive the primary and secondary watershed changes. When watersheds are altered without considering downstream effects, it can cause hazards to human settlement (flooding) as well as ecosystems (e.g. increased turbidity, reduced oxygen, increased nitrates, bank erosion and loss of breeding grounds). The ecosystems most susceptible to problems of accelerated drainage, increase volume of water flow, unnatural rates of erosion and landslide within watersheds are the riverine, lake and wetland systems that provide habitat to aquatic species and food and water to terrestrial species. Watershed and river corridor programs are addressed by the major departments, boards and conservancies within Resource Agency, the Agency itself, as well as in CALFED, Cal/EPA and federal land acquisition agencies.

## **DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND GAME**

### **Land Acquisition Evaluations**

The Land Acquisition Evaluation (LAE) is the standard proposal used by the Department of Fish and Game to evaluate a property for full fee acquisition or conservation easement acquisition. Generally, there is a well-defined and specific primary purpose for a particular acquisition, e.g., Central Valley wetland, riparian habitat. The LAE provides the data necessary to evaluate the property so that it can be assigned a score that is used as a qualitative assessment of its values compared to other like properties in the State. Ecological criteria, management factors and public use availability are used in scoring each property.

### **Conceptual Area Protection Plans**

A conceptual area protection plan (CAPP) differs from an LAE in the following ways:

- CAPPs encompass larger geographic areas than LAEs and serve as planning tools for the region to protect large blocks of habitat (LAE example: Threatened and Endangered Species on a property within a canyon; CAPP example: headwaters, creek drainage and properties in and surrounding the canyon; habitat lands defined by a Habitat Conservation Plan)
- CAPPs are long-term planning instruments with all properties either listed in acquisition priority order; or grouped in tiers according to acquisition priority (e.g., Priority A, B, C). Generally, CAPPs are the result of partnerships with other agencies and conservation entities, and various partners will acquire different parts of the CAPP.

CAPPs are presented to the Lands Committee in the same format used for LAEs. The only difference is the inclusion of all properties (including parcel numbers with maps), even if properties are not presently available for purchase. The properties are numbered or tiered in order of ecological or protective significance (and, therefore, acquisition priority) and should meet a similar purpose for acquisition. Setting priorities for acquisition properties within the CAPP is necessary for Wildlife Conservation Board action.

## **Criteria Used to Set Priorities**

### Local and/or statewide significance:

Potential project sites have greater significance than others if they contain more of the following factors:

- Critical wintering, breeding, or migratory habitat
- Extremely rare species or habitats
- Excellent representative examples of specific species or habitats
- Essential habitat linkages
- Critical buffer zones
- Species or habitats that are experiencing significant declines or threats throughout their statewide distribution
- Species with highly restricted distributions within the region or state
- Critical parts for maintaining ecosystem functions
- Critical habitat for species of high importance to the Department (including game species, listed species, species with wide range needs)
- Lands that are critical for successfully implementing landscape or regional conservation plans

### Site viability, habitat condition, and contribution to Department's planning efforts:

Viability refers to the site's ability, after restoration if necessary, to remain ecologically functional and to be able to recover from any natural catastrophic disturbances (fire, floods, etc.) Habitat condition refers to the level of disturbance currently evident on the site, including the presence of invasive exotic species. Planning efforts are watershed or regional conservation planning efforts that the Department approves. Sites with high viability and good condition typically:

- Have natural vegetation that covers large areas, or they are adjacent to large protected natural areas or other natural landscapes (for example, a large stand of blue-oak woodland adjacent to public land)
- Contain, or help protect, robust populations of species (for example, a large population of bald eagles that has good reproductive success)

- Face few, if any, immediate or near-term threats (development nearby, invasive species, pollution, detrimental human access, etc.)
- Have watersheds upstream of the site that are relatively undisturbed
- If managed intensively for special purposes, have potential for multi-species protection

#### Site Diversity:

Diversity needs to be considered in terms of genetic diversity, species diversity, habitat diversity and landscape diversity. This diversity also needs to be evaluated in terms of both on-site diversity or how the site contributes to protecting overall diversity throughout the region or state. For example, a site may have lots of different species or habitats (high on-site diversity), yet, if most of these species are already adequately protected elsewhere, the acquisition would contribute relatively little additional diversity to the regional or statewide protected area network (low regional or statewide significance). Examples of high diversity values are:

- High number of species or habitats present on site
  - Populations of native species that exhibit important subspecies or genetic varieties
  - Populations of native species or habitats that inhabit special environments, such as an unusual soil series, specific elevation, geographic extreme, or climatic condition (for example, the wettest or most northerly location of a species within the state)
  - Representative examples of functional diversity (species-species interactions, fire or flooding regimes, etc) for native habitats
- Natural landscapes that support representative examples of important, ecological functions (flooding, fire, sand transport, etc.)

### **WILDLIFE CONSERVATION BOARD**

The Wildlife Conservation Board (WCB) acquires real property or rights in real property on behalf of the Department of Fish and Game (DFG) and can also grant funds to other governmental entities or nonprofit organizations to acquire real property or a

particular right in real property. Property considered for acquisition is evaluated by DFG using the LAE or CAPP format. Once an evaluation is complete, the approved project proposal is submitted to the WCB for consideration for funding. All approved LAEs and CAPPs are entered onto a land acquisition list while awaiting consideration for funding.

**LAE or CAPPs may be funded by WCB after consideration of the following:**

- Funding availability for the subject habitat type
- Willing seller status
- Management considerations
- Funding leverage through partnerships, donations and/or grants
- Threats of conversion

**DEPARTMENT OF PARKS AND RECREATION**

The Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR) acquires land for eight different purposes. Each purpose has its own set of criteria to set priorities within that purpose. The purposes, characteristics and criteria are discussed below. Acquisition proposals that DPR formally reviews and prioritizes are initially brought through the Property Acquisition Proposal process. This process, which includes entities outside of DPR, is initiated by Sacramento Headquarters staff, who establish statewide State Park System (SPS) strategies and focus for proposals received from a wide variety of sources, including field staff. Each acquisition category below briefly summarizes strategies and focus for the SPS. For example, DPR presently is seeking and will give priority to properties in the three least protected ecological regions (bioregions) in California. Also, DPR is seeking properties suitable for outdoor recreational opportunities located within or near urban areas.

Proposals are assessed using the criteria summarized below. DPR encourages partnerships, where appropriate, and supports proposals identified in regional conservation plans with a tie to the State Park System.

**Sustainable Ecosystems** – Emphasis on maintaining or increasing the ecological diversity of existing SPS lands

Project Types

- Landscape/habitat linkages – Between permanently protected areas
- Under-Protected Habitat Types – Major habitat types that are less than 20% protected
- Watershed Protection – Additions to selected key watersheds within SPS lands
- Buffers to Existing Wildlands – Additions whose primary purpose is to reduce impacts from urbanization/other deleterious land uses to key SPS units

Criteria

- Cumulative Acreage of overall reserve area
- Regional Conservation Planning ties to SPS and identified priorities
- Functionality – Linkages, buffers, avoids fragmentation
- Configuration – Minimizes negative edge effects on parklands or reserve
- Condition of Property – Minimal disturbance to existing natural processes

**Unique Natural Reserve Areas**

Project Types

- Rare habitat types/concentrations of listed species near or adjacent to SPS units
- Significant type localities of paleontologic or geologic features not well represented within or without SPS
- Wetland and riparian areas, especially those beyond the coast or jurisdiction of State conservancies

Criteria

- Properties should be linked to larger, sustainable reserve areas
- Condition of resources and existing naturally functioning systems
- Regional Conservation Plan – Priority within plan and tie to SPS
- Configuration – Minimize negative edge effects

## **Cultural Landscapes and Corridors**

### Project Characteristics:

- Various cultural landscape and corridor properties that are under-represented within SPS, such as landscapes significant for their association with a historic theme
- Properties should contribute important themes in California history and convey a special significance in California's development
- Properties should be of a sufficient scale and character for accurate representation of the culture area, time period and human achievement and possess some combination of the seven aspects/qualities that define physical integrity for eligibility to the National Register of Historic Places

### Criteria

- Cultural landscapes/corridors in which significant cultural themes and properties are under-represented in the SPS
- Prehistoric period, cultural landscapes/corridors that represent culture areas, time periods, and themes not currently encompassed within the SPS
- Cultural resource properties that are threatened with destruction by development

Undisturbed complexes of historic or prehistoric sites/properties where substantial preservation of the view shed and setting and properties that are eligible for inclusion as a District on the National Register of Historic Places or California Register of Historical Resources

## **Significant Cultural Resource Properties**

### Project Characteristics

- Significant prehistoric, ethnographic (define this term – remember the audience), and historic properties with sites or structures that are closely associated with a cultural era/theme and those that are not well-represented within SPS
- Significant prehistoric mound sites and ethnographic village sites in the Central Valley

- Properties that represent the antiquity and diversity of California cultures and are strategically located to provide a complete or potential linkage to other federal, state, or local protected lands

#### Criteria

- Unique prehistoric, ethnographic, and historic properties that are not currently protected or are not found in the SPS and eligible for the National Register and possess high degree of physical integrity
- Cultural resource types that can be linked to significant themes in the prehistory and history of California and are under-represented in the SPS
- Properties that document the diversity and antiquity of human achievement and have potential for effective management and interpretation
- Cultural resource properties that are threatened with destruction by development

### **Expanded Recreational Opportunities**

#### Project Characteristics

- Properties adjacent to or nearby existing state parks that can be readily developed to increase the number and variety of outdoor recreational opportunities
- Properties strategically located within urban areas or within reasonable traveling distance from highly populated urban areas
- Properties of sufficient scale and character to allow for ready development of recreation facilities in significant numbers

#### Criteria

- Nominated projects located within a reasonable traveling distance of urban centers; particular emphasis on under-served populations
- Nominated projects that are of sufficient scale/character to be readily developed for significant numbers; particular consideration will be given to projects including a water feature
- Projects that are located in vacation destination areas with easy access



- Proposed land acquisitions that are immediately adjacent to/nearby proximity to existing State Park System units

## **Urban Strategies**

### Project Characteristics:

- Properties located in the State's most highly urbanized areas of sufficient scale with areas suitable for restoration of native complexes
- Lands that will include natural and/or cultural resources indigenous to the area and will accommodate recreation facilities
- Lands acquired in urban areas should be of scale to serve both needs of nearby neighborhoods and needs of visitors from throughout the boarder region

### Criteria

- Urban open space lands that fulfill the mission of the Department – high in natural/cultural resource values or that provide critical bio-connectivity and serving urban open space needs
- Urban open space lands in critically under-served densely populated urban areas
- Lands of sufficient size/scale to serve local open space needs and the needs of residents from broader regional areas
- Candidate acquisitions that incorporate opportunities for educational and interpretive use

## **Trail Connections and Corridors**

### Project Characteristics

- Trail opportunities within urban areas or within reasonable traveling distance of highly populated urban areas, particularly to under-served urban residents
- Preferred trails acquisition projects that will accommodate many types of single/multi-use trail interests as are possible, with minimal conflicts
- Trail opportunities that offer the greatest degree of connectivity, i.e., connect with population centers, connect with other statewide and local trail corridors,

and connect to outstanding scenic historic, natural or educational resources/attractions

#### Criteria

- Proposed trails acquisitions within or near under-served urban areas
- Proposed trails acquisitions that extend from existing units of the SPS
- Given to candidate projects that connect with other statewide and/or local trail corridors and enable development of connecting trails
- Candidate acquisitions that incorporate existing trails and supporting facilities, i.e., campgrounds, access points with parking, staging areas, etc.

### **In holdings and Adjacent Parcels**

#### Project Characteristics

- Various lands that are either inholdings or adjacent lands to the SPS. These acquisition proposals that are predominately smaller in acreage and can be purchased for less than \$500,000
- Candidate properties for inholding status must be at least 50 percent surrounded by existing State Park ownership
- Candidate properties for adjacent land status must have at least one contiguous boundary with existing State Park ownership

#### Criteria

- Improve operations of an existing State Park unit and eliminate potential and/or existing management problems associated with the inholding or adjacent properties
- Candidate parcels contain significant cultural resource values and/or cultural and/or recreational values and/or provide a significant buffer for an existing State Park unit

## **DEPARTMENT OF CONSERVATION (DOC)**

DOC provides grants for agricultural conservation easements meeting the following criteria:

### **Eligibility Criteria**

- Parcel is expected to continue to be used for agricultural production
- The applicable city or county has a general plan which demonstrates a long term commitment to agriculture
- Grant proposal is consistent with city or county general plan
- Without conservation, the parcel is likely to convert to non-agriculture use in foreseeable future

If the proposed agricultural conservation easement meets the eligibility criteria, the proposal is reviewed based upon the extent to which it satisfies the following selection criteria as mandated in the Public Resources Code section 10252:

### **Selection Criteria**

- The quality of the agricultural land, based on land capability, farmland mapping and monitoring program definitions, productivity indices, and other soil, climate, and vegetative factors.
- The proposal meets multiple natural resource conservation objectives, including, but not limited to, wetland protection, wildlife habitat conservation, and scenic open-space preservation.
- The city or county demonstrates a long-term commitment to agricultural land conservation as demonstrated by the following:
  - The general plan and related land use policies of the city or county
  - Policies of the local agency formation commission
  - California Environmental Quality Act policies and procedures.
  - The existence of active local agricultural land conservancies or trusts.
  - The use of an effective right-to-farm ordinance.
  - Applied strategies for the economic support and enhancement of agricultural enterprise, including water policies, public education, marketing support, and consumer and recreational incentives.

- Other relevant policies and programs.
- If the land is in a county that participates in the Williamson Act, the land proposed for protection is within a county or city designated agricultural preserve.
- The land proposed for conservation is within two miles outside of the exterior boundary of the sphere of influence of a city as established by the local agency formation commission.
- The applicant demonstrates fiscal and technical capability to effectively carry out the proposal. Technical capability may be demonstrated by agricultural land conservation expertise on the governing board or staff of the applicant, or through partnership with an organization that has that expertise.
- The proposal demonstrates a coordinated approach among affected landowners, local governments, and nonprofit organizations. If other entities are affected, there is written support from those entities for the proposal and a willingness to cooperate. The support of neighboring landowners who are not involved in the proposal shall be considered.
- The conservation of the land supports long-term private stewardship and continued agricultural production in the region.
- The proposal demonstrates an innovative approach to agricultural land conservation with a potential for wide application in the state.
- The amount of matching funds and in-kind services contributed by local governments.
- The price of the proposed easement purchase is cost-effective in comparison to the actual easement value.
- Other relevant considerations established by the director.

## **STATE CONSERVANCIES WITHIN THE RESOURCES AGENCY**

### **STATE COASTAL CONSERVANCY (SCC)**

The SCC acquires land that meets the following criteria:

#### **Required Criteria**

##### **Meets the Conservancy's statutory programs and purposes**

- Preservation of Agricultural Land
- San Francisco Bay Area Conservancy Program
- Coastal Restoration Projects
- Coastal Resources Enhancement Projects
- Urban Waterfront Restoration
- Reservation of Significant Coastal Resource Areas
- System of Public Access ways

##### **Consistent with purposes of the funding source**

- Habitat Conservation Fund (wildlife habitat enhancement)
- Renewable Resource Investment Fund (access associated with resource enhancement projects)
- River Protection and Parkways Fund (projects along coastal rivers)
- Challenge Grant Program (access and wetland restoration projects with State funds matched at least 1:1 by non-State funds)
- Support from the public
- Location (must benefit coastal resources or the San Francisco Bay region)
- Need (desired project or result will not occur without Conservancy participation)
- Greater-than-local interest

#### **Additional Criteria**

- Urgency (threat to a coastal resource from development or natural or economic conditions; pressing need; or a fleeting opportunity)

- Resolution of more than one issue
- Leverage (contribution of funds or services by other entities)
- Conflict resolution
- Innovation (for example, environmental or economic demonstration)
- Readiness (ability of the grantee and others to start and finish the project in a timely manner)
- Realization of prior Conservancy goals (advances previous Conservancy projects)
- Return to Conservancy (funds will be repaid to the Conservancy, consistent with the Conservancy's long-term financial strategy)
- Cooperation (extent to which the public, nonprofit groups, landowners, and others will contribute to the project)

### **CALIFORNIA TAHOE CONSERVANCY (CTC)**

Acquisition is a key tool to implement the Lake Tahoe Environment Improvement Program (EIP).

The EIP provides the strategic context for the State's investment at Lake Tahoe to attain the environmental threshold carrying capacities adopted by the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency in the following categories – water quality, soil conservation, air quality, vegetation, fisheries, wildlife, scenic resources/community design, recreation and noise. The acquisition activities are either specifically reflected in the EIP or are programmatically consistent with the objectives of the EIP.

Specifically, the CTC is implementing a comprehensive and integrated set of programs that deal with preservation of water quality and the natural environment (acquisition of environmentally sensitive lands, transfer of development rights and mitigation banking, Stream Environment Zone (SEZ) and watershed restoration), the provision of public access and recreation opportunities, and the preservation of wildlife and wildlife habitat. The scope of the CTC's programs allows it to comprehensively deal with significant resource needs throughout the California side of the Lake Tahoe Basin.

The CTC is utilizing a combination of methods to set priorities to acquire land in order to be as responsive and effective as possible. First, CTC is using numerical and other criteria based on the characteristics of the land (e.g., steep slopes susceptible to soil erosion) to identify needed acquisitions. Due to the large number of these types of parcels and site inspection data, CTC uses a mass acquisition approach. Specifically, CTC contacts all potentially eligible parcels simultaneously and process the transactions by mail in order to expedite the program. Second, use identified program objectives to review grant proposals or the development of projects by the Conservancy. This approach is especially useful for those situations where opportunities arise which are short-lived and unforeseen (e.g., a lakefront private residence near a public access facility is placed on the market), for those situations where multiple program objectives can be achieved, and for those acquisitions which are identified as part of site improvement planning processes (e.g., soil erosion control grant projects).

### **COACHELLA VALLEY MOUNTAINS CONSERVANCY (CVMC)**

The CVMC acquires land in the Coachella Valley and the surrounding mountains for wildlife protection, restoration and environmental evaluation. The CVMC is leading an effort within Riverside County and the Coachella Valley cities to produce a Natural Communities Conservation Plan (NCCP). The conservation reserves and corridors necessary for NCCP plan success are the acquisition priorities of the CVMC.

### **SAN JOAQUIN RIVER CONSERVANCY (SJRC)**

The SJRC buys land within the statutorily defined San Joaquin River Parkway, an area of 5900 acres. With such a small area priorities are largely determined by the availability of willing sellers.

## **SANTA MONICA MOUNTAINS CONSERVANCY (SMMC)**

The Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy Work Program is divided into broad geographic areas: Simi Hills, the Eastern Santa Monica Mountains, Western Santa Monica Mountains, Eastern Rim of the Valley, Western Rim of the Valley, and River/Urban projects. Acquisition projects are placed on this work program in high, medium and low priorities by the use of evaluation criteria covering the following Resource Values:

### Wildlife:

- Within a large block of undisturbed core habitat
- State or federally listed wildlife species
- Habitat linkage
- Important aquatic and/or riparian habitat

### Floristic:

- Listed plant species
- High percentage of full canopy forest or oak woodland
- High plant species diversity

### Recreational:

- Area suitable for major planned recreational facility

### Archaeological or Historic:

- Registered sites
- Community landmark

### Urban:

- Contribution to existing or proposed greenway
- Native plant communities surrounded by development
- Located in park-poor community

### Partnerships:

- Significance to partners with matching funding
- Fulfill large component of master conservation or recreation plan
- Partner would manage site

### Economic Opportunity:



- Site is a bargain
- Site subject to eminent threat
- State budget line item

## **SAN GABRIEL AND LOWER LOS ANGELES RIVER AND MOUNTAINS CONSERVANCY (RMC)**

The RMC has just completed an Open Space Plan that provides guidance for setting acquisition priorities.

### River Parkways:

- Create continuous open space along Los Angeles, San Gabriel, and Rio Hondo Rivers

### Urban Lands

- Acquire parcels to provide open space, provide recreation, habitat restoration and flood mitigation.

### Mountains, Foothills and Hills

- Connect San Gabriel Mountains with the Puente and Chino Hills and the Santa Ana Mountains.

Connect the Angeles National Forest with the Cleveland National Forest and the Santa Monica Mountains with the Santa Susana Mountains and the Simi Hills and San Gabriel Mountains.

### Resource Values

- Within the above categories, the RMC evaluates resource value criteria similar to the SMMC.

## **BALDWIN HILLS CONSERVANCY (BHC)**

The Baldwin Hills Conservancy is currently working to identify and prioritize acquisition and development projects that are critical to the expansion of Kenneth Hahn State Recreation Area (KHSRA). The Conservancy aims to expand KHSRA to become

a 1200-acre state and regional park. Acquisitions are targeted that hold significant public value as open space with critical viewsheds that are unique to the region.

The Conservancy seeks to acquire surface rights from willing sellers in the Baldwin Hills totaling approximately 660 acres that are now in private ownership and are not protected by easements. Approximately 320 acres are located directly across from KHSRA in the western ridgeline of the Baldwin Hills including nearly 120 acres of natural habitat area with existing healthy native coastal sage scrub. In total, there are approximately 500 acres of degraded land that remain in oil production. These lands are primarily situated along the southern portion of the eastern ridgeline just below KHSRA. An adjacent 40 acres have also been prioritized for acquisition as a connector trail to KHSRA.

## **CONCLUSION**

Several conclusions can be drawn from this report:

- The Resources Agency departments do have specific criteria to evaluate acquisition projects and to identify areas that need special planning for resource preservation. These criteria also reflect the broader agency goals discussed on pages four through seven.
- Most of the criteria are used to evaluate sites on a case-by-case basis. Some agencies have more systematic and geospatial data in different parts of the state than other agencies.
- Many of the Departments, Boards and Conservancies rely heavily on regional and local expertise and knowledge to apply criteria to evaluate specific sites for acquisition.
- As there are overlaps in legislative mandates, there are some criteria that are critical to the decisions of many Resource Agency Departments. Finding data to represent those multi agency criteria on a statewide basis is a goal of the Legacy Project.

As the Agency moves towards the second conservation priorities report, the Legacy Project will provide some specific tools to aid decision-makers as they develop

regional and statewide conservation priority investments. Statewide and regional conservation priorities will be built upon the base of existing and emerging local and regional conservation plans, being collected now. The Agency will also build on the existing base of protected areas as we improve our maps of public ownership and lands protected by conservation easements and agreements. Knowing what is protected, and where the gaps are, will be an important building block for setting conservation priorities in future years.

Through the Legacy Project the Agency will also be working with regional Conservancies and local governments to find ways of developing higher resolution data to identify key resources in and around urban areas. Finally, next year's conservation priorities report should evaluate more than acquisition priorities as conservation investments; stewardship and restoration of both private and public lands with important resources will also be addressed.